



# News Release

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY  
John L. Clayton, Director

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**MEDIA CONTACT**

Fernando Vender  
(602)542-5496

## ***DES Director Commissions Independent Panel To Probe Death; Orders Review Of Similar Cases***

(Phoenix, August 27, 2002)-Department of Economic Security Director John Clayton has commissioned an independent panel of medical, child welfare and legal experts to evaluate the full circumstances surrounding the death of Anndreah Robertson.

The panel will review the agency's management of this case and recommend policy and/or procedural changes, and other actions, if necessary.

The Director also ordered an immediate review of similar cases to ensure the safety of children reported to the Child Protective Services system.

"It is obvious that CPS could have done more to place Anndreah in a more suitable environment," Director Clayton said. "It appears that, from a preliminary review, certain actions taken in this case were not in keeping with the Department's mission of protecting children."

"I am committed to the safety of every child referred to our system," Clayton said. "We are all deeply saddened by the findings of a nine-month investigation into the cause of Anndreah's tragic death."

"Now we must try to understand how and why Anndreah died, and how we might use that knowledge to prevent other deaths," Clayton said.

The independent panel is being formed; confirmed members include Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Maurice Portley and Children's Action Alliance Executive Director Carol Kamin.

Director Clayton also is asking the panel to review applicable laws to determine whether possible changes are necessary that might clarify the relationship between a mother's pre- and post-natal substance use and her ability to parent a child. "There is a gap between public expectations regarding the state's authority to intervene in such matters and what is permissible under law," Director Clayton said.

The panel's review also is designed to foster an inter-agency, community-based commitment to establish policies and safeguards to further protect children.

"The safety of children remains my utmost concern," Director Clayton said. "I will take all necessary actions within the scope of my authority to operate an effective response system for investigating allegations of abuse and neglect. When the system does not respond adequately, I will make no excuses nor tolerate the same from my staff."

